



GAZEBO

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**Your Community
News and
Event Resource
for the
Town of Highland**

June 2009

Levee Nearing Completion

A bevy of utility and pipeline crews descended along a small stretch of the Little Calumet River this spring, completing a complex relocation of lines necessary to complete Highland's portion of the Little Calumet River flood control project. The 150-foot section of the levee that houses the utility and pipe lines – located directly south of Optimist Lake – and the area along the Wicker Park Golf Course are the last sections in need of enhanced flood protection in Highland.



*A glimpse of the new levee at
Kennedy Avenue.*

When that final portion is complete later this year, it will bring to a close a project that has been underway in town for the last 15 years. Constructing taller concrete and earthen berms to replace the clay structures that had been in place for half a century has taken decades in planning and implementation.

The project was designed by the Army Corps of Engineers and stretches the entire length of

the Little Calumet River – from Portage to the Indiana/Illinois state line.

A portion of Highland was bumped to the top of the list in 1990 after the entire Wicker Park Manor neighborhood flooded to the rooftops. Since then, the commission has worked to finish the project – safeguarding the rest of Highland and neighboring communities from the flood waters that overwhelm the river.

John Mroczkowski, a Highland resident who served on the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission for 10 years by appointment of the governor, said he is thrilled to see the long-awaited project completed.

“Moving all of these transmission lines has been a huge undertaking. There was a sequence that needed to be followed and each of the crews worked to get their part of the job completed,” he said. “Officials from Highland have been very supportive of this project, cooperating in every way they could and providing the necessary rights-of-way to do the levee construction.”

As one of many who was out sandbagging in 2008 when September storms overwhelmed the region, Town Council President Dan Vassar said completion of the

Thank You

A big thank you goes out to all of the individuals who have responded to the first issue of the Gazebo Express with comments and suggestions for future issues of the publication.

Look in upcoming issues to learn more about the future of the northernmost leg of the bike path in Highland once the Indianapolis Boulevard bridge comes tumbling down and the status of Highland's \$2 million loan to Hammond, which helped the city demolish the Kennedy Park Apartment complex, about Highland's policy for sidewalk repair and the rules when it comes to taking your pooch to the park.

Please forward your suggestions to:

**Gazebo Express c/o
Highland Town Hall
3333 Ridge Road
Highland, Indiana 46322**

or via email to:

gazeboexpress@gmail.com

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See related article – Taking Highland Out of the Flood Zone

Continued from page 1 – Final Phase of Little Calumet River Levee Complete

Taking Highland Out of the Flood Zone

With the Little Calumet levee project nearing completion, plans are underway to request an early release from flood zone restrictions for homes and businesses located along the Little Calumet corridor.

Highland Public Works Director John Bach said town officials are working with Hammond to get approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for an easing of restrictions.

“What this means is relaxing the building restrictions in the area – individuals will be able to build a home with a basement – because the threat of flooding has been mitigated,” he said. “It could also mean housing insurance cost reductions for residents who live in the flood plain. Right now, the flood insurance issue is in flux, but it is likely that it will save residents money on their insurance premiums.”

FEMA’s approval of a request for a “conditional letter of map revision,” would remove Highland and Hammond neighborhoods from the flood zone two or more years sooner than it would if town officials waited until the project was completed to the Indiana/Illinois state line.

“Removing the town from the flood zone earlier in the process will save money and may assist in developing north Kennedy Avenue,” Mr. Bach said. “We are very hopeful FEMA will approve this request.”

levee, along with ongoing flood control projects are all steps in the right direction.

“Our number one priority as a council is to seek and implement quality solutions to our town’s flooding issues,” he said. “The Little Calumet project is one step in a very long process to help protect our community. This is a win for the town of Highland and I’m very happy this step is nearly complete.”

Highland resident Dan Dernulc, who currently serves as chairman of the Little Calumet River Commission, said, like Mr. Mroczkowski, he is excited to see another phase of the project completed. Munster’s portion of the project, as well as what remains to be completed in Hammond are scheduled to be done by the end of 2010.

“This is great news all around,” he said. “When this project is complete, residents will have the additional protection they need and will be able to save hundreds of dollars a year because they will no longer have to purchase flood insurance.”

Mr. Dernulc said the river basin commission has already approached the Indiana General Assembly for funding to routinely inspect and maintain the length of the levee to insure it continues to protect residents of the region.

Cline Avenue Slated for Expansion

Plans are underway to expand Cline Avenue beginning in 2010. Public Works Director John Bach said he expects that bids will be awarded in December for the project that will widen Cline Avenue to three lanes from Ridge Road south to 45th Street. The long-awaited project will include curbs, lighting and installation of storm sewers and drainage in place of the open ditches that line the road. Already, there have been some questions about the project.

“We have already been asked why the road will be three lanes – and not four,” Mr. Bach said. “North of Ridge Road, Cline Avenue is a super highway designed to provide easy access to the Borman Expressway, the Indiana Toll Road, the steel mills and even to Chicago via the Cline Avenue extension. But south of Ridge Road, Cline Avenue takes on more of a residential character. We have discussed this issue with officials from Griffith and they very much want major traffic to continue along Broad Street and not into the residential neighborhoods along Cline Avenue and we are respectful of their wishes with regard to the road.”

The \$5 million project will be paid for using a combination of federal highway and local road funds. The local match for the project is expected to be about \$1 million, which will be shared by Highland and Griffith.

Neighbors Partner for Paving

With an infusion of cash from the federal stimulus grant program, Highland and Griffith will be working together to get much-needed paving projects completed this summer.

Slated for refurbishing are:

- 45th and Main Streets from Kennedy Avenue to Kleinman Road. Both thoroughfares were in need of work and deteriorated further through the winter months. Griffith will be spearheading the Main Street project while Highland will be managing the 45th Street upgrade.

Detention Basin on Track for Summer Construction

The Board of Sanitary Commissioners is advancing plans for completion of a detention basin in north Highland during the summer construction season. A follow-up meeting with residents interested in the Homestead Gardens storm water control project is scheduled for June 16.

In place are construction designs for a basin to serve as a holding area for as much as 1.6 million gallons of storm water. As levels recede following heavy rains, water in the basin is planned to be discharged into the Little Calumet River at a controlled rate. The detention area is planned to be dry 95 percent of the time. It is during that critical 5 percent of the time when the detention basin will be invaluable in relieving yard flooding and sewer back-ups in homes in the Homestead Gardens neighborhood. The north Highland project is the first of its kind for the Sanitary Board but will likely not be the last.

The board is looking at this project as a prototype, which may be used in other locations in town where storm water is an ongoing problem. The board is utilizing the notion of detention basins along with efforts to eliminate infiltration into the sanitary sewers and disconnecting sump pumps that are illegally connected to the sanitary sewer system to eliminate long-standing water problems throughout town.

Small Biz Development Help Available

Individuals interested in growing a business of their own can tap into a bevy of free and low-cost resources through the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center. It is the goal of the agency to assist start-up businesses in becoming successful by providing comprehensive business management advice. Input available through the Small Business Development Center includes training, resources and information services. Thousands of individuals tap into the resource each year, which helps equip small businesses with the know-how they need to succeed. For more information on the free and low-cost products and services available through the NWI SBDC, visit www.nwisbdc.org or call 219-644-3513.

Setting the Bar for Redevelopment

The Redevelopment Commission is establishing guidelines for the revitalization of the north Kennedy Avenue corridor. Bordered on the north by the Little Calumet River and on the south by Lincoln Street, the development area was created to encompass the downtown and north commercial corridors with a goal to attract new businesses to the area.

The Town Council will be finalizing rules before the end of the year that will be used as a template to help guide business construction in the development area. The guidelines are being established to retain the mid-century modern look and feel of the town, while providing mixed use areas for commercial, retail and residential along the development corridor. The goal is to create an environment which is walkable, well-lit and pedestrian friendly, one that encourages people to live, work and play in the area.

Council Eyes Future of Public Buildings

The town has purchased the two residential properties along Ridge Road immediately west of the Highland Municipal Complex.

The goal: to provide additional land that could be used to expand and convert the existing Town Hall into a public safety facility to house the police and fire departments.

The land purchase is part of a long-range plan members of the Town Council will be discussing and studying over the next 12-18 months as they look to provide for the needs of the community.

"We would like to get a study done as soon as possible," said Council President Dan Vassar. "If a decision is made to centralize the police and fire departments, we have discussed using the land that currently houses the Central Fire Station to be the site of a new Town Hall."

"We need to put our police officers in a facility that meets the standards of the 21st Century and right now, we're not even close," he said. "I would like to put this on the fast track and – while we are sensitive to the economy – it is prudent of us to do both short- and long-term planning for the needs of the town."

Councilman Bernie Zemen said it is vital that the council begin planning for the future. "I am getting tired of spending money to put band-aids on the floors and ceilings," he said. "We definitely need a new police station. Highland had 22 officers when this facility was built. Today, we have 41."

Mark Your Calendars...



Summer Concert Series

This year's summer concert series promises to be better than ever. All performances begin on Thursdays before sunset at 7 pm at the Gazebo in Main Square Park. Bleacher seating is available – or bring your favorite lawn chair. Concessions are available. Don't forget the bug spray! The concert series begins June 11 when the Highland Community Band takes the stage.

The series continues:

- **June 18** – Chicago Voice Exchange, a five-member a cappella group;
- **June 25** – Johnny Russler and the Beach Bum Band. This group travels with Jimmy Buffet and will delight you with strains of tropical rock, reggae, Caribbean and beach music.
- **July 9** – Eddie Blazonczyk's Versatones. This Grammy Award winning artist was named Best Polka Entertainer of 2007 at the Chicago Music Awards. Bring your dancing shoes or sit back and listen to the familiar polka tunes. The event will also feature Polish dining favorites.
- **July 16** – Bopology. Featuring the big band sounds of Duke Ellington, this group is Chicago's favorite swing, jazz and Frank Sinatra-esque group. This six-piece band features some of the finest musicians in Chicago.

Fourth of July Festival 2009

Schedule of Events

Run the Mile

This annual one-mile race kicks off Highland's Twilight Independence Day Parade. All participants receive a tee-shirt. Entry forms are available at Lincoln Center. Race day registrations will be held in the School Administration Building. Open to all age groups, the race begins at 6:30 pm Friday, July 3 at 40th Street and Kennedy Avenue. Fee is \$6 through July 2 and \$9 on Race Day.

Watch the Parade

This year's Fourth of July Festival/Celebration will begin at 4 pm, Wednesday July 1 at Main Square Park.

The twilight parade will kick off at 6:30 pm, Friday, July 3. The parade begins at St. James the Less Catholic Church (located at 45th and Kennedy), continues north on Kennedy to Highway Avenue and east along Highway to the park.

Enjoy the Fireworks

Fireworks will begin at 9 pm at Homestead Park on Saturday, July 4.

Dance with the Bands

Bands that will be featured on stage include; Crawpuppies, History's End, Relics, Gone 2 Paradise and Mystic Fire.

Ride bracelets will be \$20 again this year.



Festival Hours

Wednesday, July 1

4 pm to 10 pm

Friday, July 3

4 pm to Midnight

Sunday, July 5

Noon to 10 pm

Thursday, July 2

4 pm to Midnight

Saturday, July 4

Noon to Midnight

Think Autumn: It's Pop Warner Sign-Up Time

Highland Pop Warner Football and Cheer Registration will take place June 20 and July 11 from 10 am to 2 pm at Lincoln Center. If you have questions, please contact Tracy Oprea at 923-4925 or Mike Brown at 769-1299.

Cubs vs. Washington

Reserve your seats today for the August 25 night game when the Cubs take on Washington at Wrigley Field. Sponsored by the Park Department, the bus will leave at 4 pm from Lincoln Center. Game time is 7:05 pm. Cost is \$60 for Highland residents/\$63 for non-Highland folks. The cost includes bus transportation and Terrace reserved outfield seats.